

## Justice for Aafia US Tour Diary: Day 5 - Georgia

Contributed by Administrator  
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DRIVING on America's freeways can be a mind-numbingly boring experience as I discovered when we left Alabama for Atlanta in the neighbouring state of Georgia.

It was quite a trek and as the highway cut a straight swathe through the unremarkable countryside I looked around for a distraction.

My thoughts drifted to the night before in Birmingham University - all those young students high on activism who turned out to listen to the story of Dr Aafia Siddiqui. At the end of the meeting many pledged to support and campaign for justice and with their fearless outlook on life I'm sure their contributions will prove to be invaluable. I wished we could bottle the fearlessness of youth as we carry on our journey through life but with advancing years it seems for many of us our fears increase and activism diminishes.

Feeling slightly depressed by my thoughts I looked ahead and noticed a road sign for Montgomery, home to one of the most famous human rights battles in the world and then I remembered the name of Alabama's Rosa Louise McCauley.

She lived in relative obscurity for 42 years, until one fateful day in December of 1955, when she waited for a bus after a hard day working as a seamstress. When it finally arrived all the seats in the back, where Blacks were allowed to sit, were quickly taken so Rosa sat down in the white section.

The bus driver told her and several other African Americans to give up their seats to whites who got on after she did. Rosa Parks, as she was then known, refused to move: The bus driver called the police, and she was arrested.

That one single act of resistance sparked a movement against segregation in Montgomery, which started with a 381-day bus boycott by African Americans. The leader of that boycott was a young Black minister named Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rosa's nonviolent passive resistance officially launched the Civil Rights Movement and on December 21, 1956, the boycott ended when the US Supreme Court declared bus segregation unconstitutional.

Some hours later as we headed off the freeway to our destination in Atlanta I noticed the road ahead was named after Dr King and then another boulevard bore the name of a peanut farmer who went on to become US President Jimmy Carter.

I reflected that for many Carter's greatness didn't really manifest itself until after his presidency when he then became actively involved in the battle for justice for Palestine.

His recent book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* brought round condemnation from the Zionist lobby because of its criticism of what he considered to be racism by the State of Israel. Each word carefully crafted, the book is a tribute to his courage.

That evening myself, Saghir Hussein from Cageprisoners, Khalil Meek the President of the Muslim Legal Fund of America and several others spoke about justice and the ongoing legal battles challenging the Muslim community.

As I looked around there were many different faces representing the community in Atlanta, young and old, Muslims and non-Muslims, students, pensioners, workers. They listened intently, applauded, cried Allahu Akhbar and donated generously to the MLFA when they were asked for financial support.

Caught between a rock and a hard place I thought any one of them could step up to the mark just like Rosa did.

The reality is none of us are born brave. We can't buy courage over the shop counter but we all want justice. Now the question you have to ask yourself is just how far are you prepared to go for it?

\* Yvonne's next blog comes to you from Milwaukee in Wisconsin, America's mid-West.